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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
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INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1364
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1217
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1368
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0113
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0629
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0994
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1422
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 3805
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1191
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 1844
RUEFDIA/DIA WASHDC//DHO-7//
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1585
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK//DOOC/ECMO/CC/DAO/DOB/DOI//
RUEPGBA/CDR USEUCOM INTEL VAIHINGEN GE//ECJ23-CH/ECJ5M//

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001349

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AF/S FOR S. HILL
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN
USAID FOR M. COPSON AND E. LOKEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/17/2011
TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: DISCORD IN THE MILITARY

REF: HARARE 1308

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell under Section 1.5 b/d

Summary

¶1. (C) MDC shadow minister for defense Giles Mutsekwa told Ambassador November 8 that according to his sources morale has plummeted at all levels of the military. The military does not yet view the MDC as a solution to the country's problems and may consider a coup, which would not be in the best interests of the country. Mugabe is aware of military discontent and has planted "commissars" in elite units to monitor their activities. Mutsekwa believes some of his high ranking military contacts would like to meet with USG; he will look into facilitating such meetings.

¶2. (C) On the political front, Mutsekwa said reunification of the two MDC factions would strengthen the opposition, which demonstrated in the recent rural council elections that it could compete with ZANU-PF in rural areas. However, to beat ZANU-PF in national elections, a reunified MDC would also need to build institutions to get out the vote. He added that the MDC continues to believe a mass uprising is possible. End Summary.

Military Discontent

¶3. (C) Mutsekwa again confirmed, as he had earlier with

polchief (ref), that his sources in the military had told him that senior military officials had urged Mugabe to step aside because of the perilous economic situation in the country and its effect on the military, including deteriorating morale. The president had deflected these officers and morale at all levels was continuing to plummet.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador queried whether this was true of the Presidential Guard and the Paratroop and Command regiments which constitute the National Reaction Force and are generally thought to be the best trained, cared for and most loyal units of the defense forces. Mutsekwa responded that the commanding officer of the Guard comes from his home village and they frequently converse. The commander told him there was growing discontent with the Guard * as well as other elite units * and should the MDC stage a large demonstration, defense forces might not intervene. Mugabe is suspicious of disloyalty and has positioned "commisars" in the elite units to monitor their activities, which has angered the soldiers and further eroded morale. At the same time, he has tried to split the higher military echelons from lower-ranking officers and enlisted men, all of whom would like change, by telling the high-ranking officers they are part of the solution and must work with him.

¶5. (C) Mutsekwa stated that the military is not confident in the MDC as an agent of political change and is in a quandary as to what to do. The recent government practice of using the military to address all issues and problems has begun to condition the troops to believe that they do indeed have the solution to the nation's problems. As a result, Mutsekwa said he fears a coup may be a greater possibility than before. This would not be in the best interests of the country. Once African military leaders take power, they

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don't give it up. Mutsekwa said the MDC is trying to convince the military that it represents a political solution in order to forestall this possibility.

¶6. (S/NF) Mutsekwa reiterated (ref) that several of his high-level contacts would like to meet with USG representatives outside of Zimbabwe. The Ambassador responded that we would look at such a request should it be made through Mutsekwa's good offices.

MDC Politics

¶7. (C) Mutsekwa said the two MDC factions have separate caucuses, but have cooperated well in parliament, which has not been meeting lately due to lack of funds. He said reunification of the party is important for future electoral success. The recent rural council elections in Manicaland and elsewhere demonstrated that the MDC can compete in rural areas. However, there was confusion in areas where both MDC factions fielded candidates * a unified MDC would obviously correct this. Additionally, ZANU-PF was able to use the governmental machinery to get out the vote and the MDC needs to develop mechanisms to mobilize its electoral supporters.

¶8. (C) The Ambassador commented that the MDC appears to have had less success recently in promoting demonstrations and wondered if new strategies had emerged at the MDC's (anti-Senate faction) executive session last weekend. Mutsekwa responded that the recent spate of small demonstrations was the result of collaboration between the MDC and some of the civil society groups involved. These demonstrations are challenging the government and creating fear on its part. Mutsekwa added he was confident the MDC would be the catalyst for a mass uprising in the future.

Comment

19. (C) Mutsewka's reports of military disquiet jibe with what we have been hearing elsewhere. The emerging pattern - efforts of high-ranking officers to get Mugabe to step aside, morale problems at all ranks, disaffection in the enlisted ranks with their leadership, and rumors of coups) all suggest that Mugabe can no longer take for granted that the military will automatically do his bidding. We are probably some distance yet from a situation in which they take matters into their own hands, but the erosion of their loyalty has set in and has begun to be a constraining factor that Mugabe has not faced previously.

DELL